

# SEEK NEWS

**VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2      SPRING/SUMMER 2013**

**THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM  
COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND/CUNY**

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

### Special points of interest:

- *Caring counselors and staff*
- *Enhanced financial assistance*
- *Free academic and other workshops*
- *Personalized services in our Learning Center*
- *Career building opportunities*
- *Computer facility with technical assistance*
- *Exciting leadership training*

Dear Students and Colleagues,

Here we are at the end of another academic year! Although I've have been the Director of SEEK for a very long time, I'm always still surprised at how quickly each semester passes. It sometimes seems as if we're just getting to know our new students when it's already time to begin welcoming another new class. College life is certainly hectic for both students and staff.



And of course, change is a fact of life here at SEEK – especially when saying “goodbye” to our graduates as we must do every year. For those students who are moving on, we wish you every success – and hope that you'll remember us and come back to see us from time to time. The same goes for Dr. Julie Davelman, one of our treasured SEEK counselors, who has also moved on. We will miss Julie greatly, and hope she finds happiness and fulfillment in her new position outside of

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## NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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As usual, the staff of the Learning Center was very busy this year – providing individual and group tutoring, designing new workshops, organizing special events and more. Even during the summer months, when things are supposed to be more laid-back, we will be busy greeting new students and planning for the fall. From the staff perspective, 1A-108 is a very “happening” place. That said, what about the students who use the Learning Center?

How do they see it fitting into their lives? For this issue of “SEEK News,” we decided to ask a few.

The Learning Center “has helped me tremendously,” says Felipe Ambrosio, a new student just finishing his freshman year. “It’s like my second home. I’ve learned a lot more than if I wouldn’t have gone.” One of his most valued experiences was a math workshop with tutor David Lightcap. According to Felipe, David made the sessions

“...fun and made learning seem easy.”

Math help seems to be central to many students’ experiences. “The Learning Center has affected my academic progress in every way,” says sophomore Julissa Gallegos, a psychology major – “but it especially helped me to improve in math.” Adds freshman Leo Balaj, “I was able to pass the math 020 class that I had previously failed. (Tutor) Amos Dean was able to ‘insert’ the information into my head. I was glad

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## CHI ALPHA EPSILON NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

The Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society recognizes the academic achievements of students who first enter college through educational opportunity programs like SEEK. Each semester, qualified SEEK students are invited to join based on their having completed at least 24 credits and maintained at least a 3.0 GPA in two consecutive full-time semesters.

As we reported in our last newsletter, Hurricane Sandy forced the postponement of our fall induction ceremony, but on May 7 a group of eleven new SEEK honorees were welcomed into the Society by Dr. Roberta Vogel and other staff members. There

are now a total of twenty-nine active XAE members at CSI.

New members receive a blue and white Honor Cord (tassel), as well as an XAE pin which in the future may be upgraded with jewels (ruby, emerald or diamond), signifying continued academic achievement. This time, 5 prior members received these jewels: ruby for Amy Chen, Joanna Irizarry-Zaraza, Suki Wu, and Shireen Shehadeh; and diamond for Marilyn Williams. Our XAE students (past and present) represent the best of what SEEK students can achieve, and they make us all proud!



Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. A. Ramona Brown, congratulates some of the new XAE inductees at the ceremony on May 7, 2013.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

CUNY.

As for the rest of us, we look forward to another busy summer here at CSI. But whether you are a student taking courses, doing internships or working outside of school, or a staff member getting ready for the fall, I hope you get a chance to recharge your batteries with some days of fun and relaxation before September. See you then.

**Gloria Garcia**



## NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

in a way that I failed, because, through tutoring, I understood all the material. For me, it's not just about passing courses, but learning the material well."

Asked what advice she'd give to other students, Julissa said, "I would tell students to use the Center more often. It's a place that offers a lot of help..." Felipe echoes this sentiment. "Use it; it's great, and you have nothing to lose."

**Ralph Pagan, Coordinator SLC**



Students and tutors pack the Learning Center in preparation for finals.



## SEEK STUDENTS SHARPEN THEIR RESEARCH SKILLS



History major Marwa Janini at CSI's Undergraduate Research Conference in April.

### SEEK'S RESEARCH ASSISTANTS PROJECT

Back in 2004, the SEEK Program established the Research Assistants Project with the goal of encouraging SEEK students to explore the world of scholarly research outside of the classroom. The idea was that students would become apprentice research assistants under the supervision of interested faculty members. In return, faculty would get help with their own ongoing research projects. Since that time, over 40 students and as many faculty have participated in the Project. Students have gained valuable hands-on experience in research design and methods, and in the process earned accolades from their faculty supervisors.

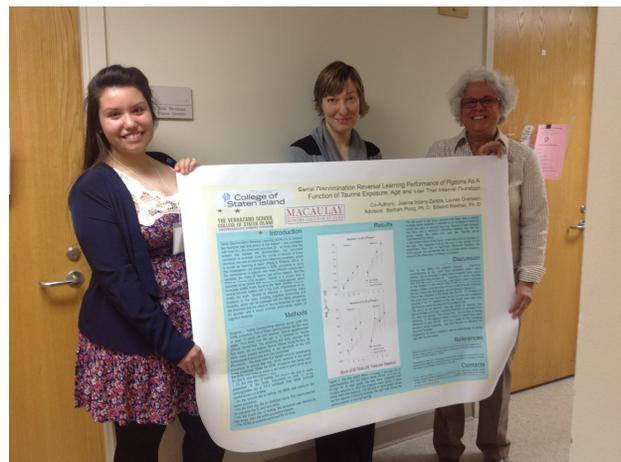
As most of these students will agree, SEEK students prosper when they learn to say "yes" to opportunities like the Research Assistants Project. This year (and last) senior Alexandra (Sasha) Doronina said yes, despite heavy course loads, two internships and more. Sasha, an accounting major, worked with Prof. Alan Zimmerman (International Business) on a variety of his projects. "Being a research assistant has helped me to broaden my horizons, and improve my research and time management skills," she says. "I'm sure this new knowledge will be useful in my future career." On a side note, this year she was also honored by CSI's Academy of Retired Professors (ARP) which awarded her its first ever undergraduate scholarship.

### CSI'S UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

It's not surprising that some of our student research assistants have moved on to the next level – formulating their own research problems and looking for new answers, while under the guidance of a faculty mentor. One such student is senior Marwa Janini who, as a SEEK Research Assistant, worked with Prof. Peter Kabachnik (PEP) for the past few semesters. This year, however, Marwa also tackled her own research interests, mounting a poster presentation at CSI's spring 2013 Undergraduate Research Conference on the survival of national identity among displaced Palestinian refugees. Marwa has been accepted into the History Program at the CUNY Graduate Center and has won honors and awards as she departs CSI.

Not every SEEK student researcher gets his or her start through the Research Assistants Project, as some find other paths here at the College. Such is the story of SEEK Senior Joanna Irizarry-Zaraza who, as a psychology major, found herself researching under the guidance of Prof. Bertrum Ploog, and presenting at the Undergraduate Research Conference. Working with another student, her investigation involved the effect of taurine exposure and other variables on the learning capacity of animals -- in this case pigeons.

With such undergrad experiences under their belts, Marwa and Joanna are sure to capitalize on these skills as they move beyond CSI. SEEK and CSI can be very proud!



Joanna (left) shows off her poster with Counselor Julie Davelman and Director Gloria Garcia.

## SEEK IN ACTION

### SEEK ORGANIZES PANEL ON “JUST AND DIGNIFIED” IMMIGRATION REFORM

What does *just and dignified* immigration reform look like? On the evening of April 30<sup>th</sup>, a panel of experts and activists brought their different perspectives on this question to an audience of students and the public, in a forum organized by the SEEK Program and co-sponsored by the CSI Division of Student Affairs, CSI's CORE Program and Peace Action of Staten Island. After an introduction by Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. A. Ramona Brown, the evening began with a presentation by Dr. Calvin Holder (History) who showed that current immigration struggles are not new, having affected many previous groups such as the Irish, Italians, Asians and

more. Next, Gonzalo Mercado, the director of El Centro del Inmigrante on Staten Island, told about his recent trip to the Arizona-Mexican border, after which the President of the newly formed College of Staten Island Dream Team, Tania Castillo, gave a student's view of what life is like without legal status. Finally, the Director of the national DREAM Action Coalition, Cesar Vargas, discussed what Dreamers are looking for in immigration reform. The evening ended with a Q & A session during which students, many from CORE 100 classes, asked thoughtful questions and kept the conversation going. SEEK believes that forums like these are valuable events for students and community alike, and thanks Dr. Roberta Vogel for helping to organize this one.



Watson Fellow Troy Weekes (on extreme right) with members of the IS 49 Young Males' Group, after a session on learning to tie ties. (above)

Carmela Balestrieri, CSI Barnes and Noble Bookstore Manager (center), pictured with children, donated 100 “7 Habits” books for the SEEK/Strategies for Success Program's after school children participants. (below)



### CHASE BANKERS PROMOTE FINANCIAL LITERACY AT A SEEK-SPONSORED WORKSHOP

On April 25, SEEK and other CSI students were treated to an informative presentation on financial planning and money management at a workshop featuring Chase Bank representatives Rosita Almeida and Jonathan Siretz. Ms. Almeida (Personal Banker at the Forest Avenue branch) and Mr. Siretz (Mortgage Banker from the same branch) led students through a lively discussion about maintaining a sound credit history, the advantages and potential problems of debt, protecting oneself from identify theft and many other important aspects of being financially literate.

The SEEK Black and Latino Scholars Group and the *Strategies for Success* Program, were co-sponsors of the event -- with funding from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. According to SEEK Learning Center Coordinator, Ralph Pagan, who attended the presentation, “With today's emphasis on easy credit for college students and the burdens of paying for a college education, this topic is really relevant for students today and for their futures in general.” Adds Director Gloria Garcia, “SEEK will continue to offer financial literacy as part of our programming, because what happens off campus can have a huge impact on academics. Students need to be aware of their finances as they move through college and beyond.”

## SEEK IN ACTION



*The happy faces of  
some*

*of our CSJ/SEEK  
Grads*



*Congratulations!*

2013



## SEEK/STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

*In every issue of "SEEK News," we give you an update on the many valuable activities of our outstanding public school tutoring/mentoring program which, for thirteen years, has sent SEEK and other CSI students to work with youngsters in afterschool settings around the Island. While the children have reaped many benefits, what impact has being a Strategies Staff member had on the lives of the mentors?*



Nada Abbass



Margaret Scalesci



Crystal Rios

2013 Graduate Nada Abbass is a SEEK student who joined *Strategies* back in 2009. Over the years, she served as a tutor/mentor in three public schools, and in 2011 became Assistant Site Coordinator for *Strategies* in the JCC Cornerstone Program at the Carter Community Center. A double political science and psychology major, Nada credits *Strategies* with giving her "...my first stepping stone into the real world. The memories and friends I've made along the way I will carry in my heart forever."

Also a SEEK student, graduate Margaret Scalesci (Psychology) joined *Strategies* in 2010, serving at the JCC Cornerstone Program as well as at PS 57 and PS 78. Says Margaret, who was recently inducted into Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE), the National Honors Society, "Being in *Strategies* helped me to become a better student over the years, and as a professional, it's helped me to work better as part of a team." Margaret is heading to Florida this fall, to take part in an internship with the Disney College Program. Her future goal involves "...working with people, possibly counseling."

While not a SEEK student, CSI's Crystal Rios joined *Strategies* back in 2007, and has served as *Strategies* Site Coordinator at JCC Cornerstone since 2011. During those years, she graduated cum laude from CSI with a degree in English Literature and Adolescent Education, and just finished her Master's in English Literature. According to Crystal, working for *Strategies* "...helped me to make the connections between what I learned in my college courses and how that gets applied to the real world." She claims many fond memories of her days in the Program, but was most inspired by the many times "...the children and I shared stories and laughs." Her *Strategies* memories reinforce her desire to become a teacher, a plan she will realize in South Korea this August when she begins teaching English there for a year.

***Like the more than 200 tutor/mentors who have worked with the Program since its inception, these three young professionals have served faithfully and with distinction. Good luck to them all!***

## NEWS TO KNOW: FALL/WINTER HIGHLIGHTS



As usual, SEEK students are winning awards and on the move, as they take advantage of all the terrific opportunities presented to them.

- For starters, in March SEEK Junior **Monica Garay** joined students from across the state at the 2013 “Somos El Futuro” Conference in Albany. Sponsored by the NYS Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican Hispanic Task Force, this annual conference, now in its twenty-sixth year, selects college students to participate in a Model NYS Senate Session Project for which students research and debate issues of public interest and concern. Monica, a Business Management major, returned to campus excited and energized by her experience, and now plans to take action through CSI’s Emerging Leaders Program.
- Sophomore **Palvishah Ismail** is a new member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS). This group, part of the Association of College Honor Societies, is the nation’s only interdisciplinary honors organization for first and second year college students. It provides career and graduate school connections, scholarships, and leadership and service opportunities. Congratulations, Palvishah!
- Congratulations are also in order for SEEK freshman **Leo Balaj** who has earned a place in the 2013 “New York Needs You” (NYNY) Fellows Program. The Fellows Program takes highly qualified, first-generation college students through an intensive training series throughout the summer, and provides career development and leadership training, including a match with a professional Mentor/Coach. Leo, who started at CSI just last August, is finishing the year with a very bright future.
- Another SEEK student who will be very busy this summer is junior **Holdaliz Brito**. As a recipient of a 2013 Summer Study Abroad scholarship awarded by the CUNY Office of Special Program, Holdaliz will be traveling to Venice, Italy to continue her studies in liberal and studio arts. Says Holdaliz, “Never did I imagine college was going to open the doors to so many opportunities such as Study Abroad, or give me a second home – the SEEK Office.” We’re looking forward to reading about her travels in the journal she plans to keep.
- Back closer to home, SEEK students **Shorouq Bazrouk, Moises Cadena, Jacqlyn Davis** and **Bruce French** have been selected to attend the CUNY SEEK/CD Student Leadership Academy in Glen Cove, NY in June. We expect they’ll return with lots of new ideas, and even greater potential for leadership than they’ve already shown. Congratulations, all!
- Another proven leader is SEEK sophomore **Clarrisa Gattas**, who has secured one of the coveted staff positions at Dolphin Cove, the new CSI student residence. We know she will shine in her new role, as she’s been a star since arriving at CSI two years ago.
- Finally, we love hearing from our SEEK graduates...even after time has passed. Most recently we heard from **Shannon Foreshee**, a spring 2010 psychology graduate. Shannon now tells us he’s just received a Master of Arts degree in Art Therapy from New York University. Shannon was a stellar student here at CSI, so we’re not surprised to see how quickly he’s progressed since he left the SEEK Program. Shannon, you and many other SEEK alums make us proud!

## ANOTHER CSI WINNER OF THE JEANNETTE K. WATSON FELLOWSHIP IS A SEEK STUDENT

As readers may remember, last summer we reported on SEEK student Troy Weekes who had just been awarded one of the 2012 Jeannette K. Watson Fellowships, representing CSI in this prestigious citywide competition. As expected, this promising young man has been involved in many initiatives this year – such as mentoring other students in the SEEK Black and Latino Scholars Initiative (BSLSI) and developing a “Young Men’s Mentoring Group” for sixth to eighth grade males as part of the SEEK/*Strategies for Success* Program at Intermediate School 49.

But now, we’re tremendously happy to report that CSI’s winner in the 2013 fellowship competition is yet another SEEK student, Mays Jumah – a Junior Biology major! As a candidate, Mays had to submit a lengthy application, and survive a grueling interview process. Acknowledging what an amazing opportunity this fellowship presents, and thanking the

SEEK counselors who encouraged her to apply, she says “Receiving it makes me very proud. It’s a reward for the work I have done in the past two years. As a freshman I was lost, but SEEK showed me the way to success.”

Mays arrived in the U.S. in 2009, originally from Iraq and then Egypt, where she lived for three years before her family moved to NYC. Through the Watson Fellowship, she will start her first internship at a non-profit organization this summer, and join other Fellows at weekly seminars and cultural events around the city. She is looking forward to learning about “life beyond school,” and enjoying the support that the fellowship will provide. Beyond her short-term goal of graduating from CSI with honors, Mays aspires to enter dental school in the future. Knowing Mays, no doubt she’ll achieve all of her dreams.

### THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND/CUNY

WE’RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.CSI.CUNY.EDU/SEEK/](http://WWW.CSI.CUNY.EDU/SEEK/)



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